

The Sixth Bottle of Wine

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Summary: The year is 2557, A UNSC Colonel receives some news from the UNSC Infinity upon its return from Requiem. He calls his four closest friends together for a special reason.

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Colonel Herny Sherman opened the door, letting his guests in. He had called them all in for a special meeting. Corporal Michelle Collins, Sergeant Tallert Phillips, and Captians James Miller and Karrie Moore entered his office. All of them were his closest friends.

"Sit down, please," Sherman said, gesturing to the four empty chairs. The four sat, and looked at the Colonel expectantly. "Now, I know all of you are wondering why I called you in here, right?"

They all nodded. "There's nothing wrong with you, right?" Karrie asked. "You're not dying, right?"

Sherman smiled softly and shook his head. "No, I'm not dying. But before I go into details, I have to tell you a story."

The guest remained silent, and let their friend tell the story.

"It was thirty-two years ago, back in 2525, the start of the Human-Covenant War.. My team and I were running evac operations in some major city. I forget which planet we were on, we had been on several, and we would be put on several more, all of them lost."

Sherman handed a photograph around. "That's us, I'm the one on the far left."

"Anyway," he continued with the story. "Three Covenant battalions were passing by, and we were forced to hide in a crumbling winery. It would be hours before reinforcements would arrive to take them out. So, the five of us found six bottles of wine, which was all that was

left intact. We each took one, and toasted to kicking Covvie ass, and within an hour, we had wiped out the first five bottles, leaving only one left.

After a few minutes of talking, we reached a decision. When we got off planet, we stowed it on Mars in a safety deposit box before we got redeployed. Who ever was the last survivor of that team would get the last bottle, and you're looking at the last survivor of that team. It became official when Stevenson was killed on Requiem."

Sherman walked over to a nearby table, and picked up the bottle of wine sitting there. "This is it, that sixth bottle of wine. And I want to share it with my newer friends, in memory of my old friends." He popped the cork, and pour five glasses of the wine. "I'm going to take the first toast alone."

The guests picked up their glasses, and Sherman raised his, alone. "To the memories of Kieth Mitchell, killed on Harvest, and of Lucy Trembe, killed on New Constantinople, and to Joesph McInytire, killed on Reach, and of Richard Stevenson, who was killed on Requiem." Shermans eyes had teared up, as he stared into space, lost in memories. "You were the friends of my youth." He tilted his head back as he drank from the wineglass. "You all can do a solo toast to the memories of your friends, if you want."

Michelle raised her glass alone. "To the memory of Kate Collins, my sister, killed on Paris IV." She drank from her glass.

James raised his glass, for his toast. "To the memories of Jacob Keyes, killed on the first Halo. We were good friends. And to that of Sarah Lancer, killed on the Ark." He drank a sip of wine, and turned to Karrie, for her toast.

"To the memory of Lucas West, my CO, who scarficed himself to get us off Reach." She took a sip, and turned to Tallert.

He raised his glass. "To the memory of Jakob Wiersbe, my friend and mentor who taught me all that I know of being a Marine. Killed by a cheap sniper shot on the first Halo." He took his sip.

They all raised their glasses. "To the memories of friends, both the old who have already passed on, and to the new who are always there for you when you need them, even in the darkest hours of your life." They toasted, and finished their glass of wine, and were dismissed.

Each one walked back to their quarters, minds lost in the past as they remembered their fallen friends and family that had been killed in the war.

End
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